DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 824 IR 050 482

AUTHOR	Brown, Marion, Comp.; And Others
TITLE	Problem Patron Manual.
INSTITUTION	Schenectady County Public Library, NY.
PUB DATE	Dec 81
NOTE	69p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - General (050)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Accidents; *Antisocial Behavior; Censorship; Guidelines; Library Material Selection; *Problems; *Public Libraries; Records (Forms)
IDENTIFIERS	*Library Procedures; *Library Users

ABSTRACT

This document presents guidelines for handling disruptive behavior in the Schenectady County Public Library (New York). Specific responses are listed for dealing with questions about library selection policy and sudden patron illness or injury. Also listed are responses to problem situations involving angry or irate patrons, assault or physically threatening patrons, chatty patrons who distract staff members, disruptive children, unattended or lost preschool children, the consumption of food or beverages in the library, disruptive patron behavior, patrons dependent on drugs or chemicals, drunks, emotionally/mentally disturbed patrons, patrons with bare feet or who place feet on tables or chairs, loiterers, panhandlers or solicitors on library premises, persons who bring pets into the library, purse snatchers, sexual deviants, sleeping patrons, "smelly" patrons, smokers, suspicious behavior, teenage gangs, theft of library materials or property, vandalism, and verbal abuse. A list of useful telephone numbers and information on the library chain of command is provided. Appendices present helpful hints on dealing with problem behavior; information on legal responses to problem behavior and self-defense techniques; sample forms used for staff reports of accidents, disturbance, or vandalism, or for patron requests for reconsideration of library materials; and sample flyers listing the rules of the library. A subject index is provided. (ESR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

PROBLEM PATRON MANUAL

ED235824

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Schenectady County Public Library

IR050482

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Timothy McGowan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

COMPILED BY:

Marion Brown
Wonja Brucker
Timothy McGowan
Malinda Myers

"Good afternoon! I'm a problem patron."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	2
III.	DEFINITIONS OF PERSON-IN-CHARGE	4
IV.	ACCIDENTS AND GENERAL COMPLAINTS	5
	Specific Enforcement Procedures	5
V.	PROBLEM BEHAVIOR	9
	Definition	9
	Handling Problem Patrons	9
	General Enforcement Procedures	10
	Exceptions to the Above Procedures	11
	Specific Enforcement Procedures	12
VI.	APPENDIX	52
	Legal Responses to Problem Behavior	52
	Helpful Hints on How to Deal with Problem Behavior	53
	Self-Defense Techniques	55
	Self-Defense: Illustrations	57
	Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report	58
	Rules of the Schenectady County Public Library	59
	Rules of the Schenectady County Public Library (flyer)	60
	Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials	61
VII.	INDEX	62

I. INTRODUCTION

Every staff member has the responsibility to keep the library as pleasant an environment for the public as possible, which includes discouraging disruptive behavior on the library premises. Problems arise because, ironically enough, in our efforts to create a pleasant atmosphere, it sometimes attracts people who jeopardize the work the staff has done.

Although the library literature is replete with examples on how to fight censorship and the responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of circulation records, etc., little mention is made of the damage caused by the problem patron. The library often appears to be a magnet for people seeking a theater for their anti-social behavior. A number of causes for this have been identified, ranging from a slumping economy as a key factor in rising violence, to an increase in mental depression, and the increase in the use of drugs and alcohol among both teenagers and adults. As a result, libraries and other public institutions will be facing more, not fewer, incidents with problem patrons. It is important, therefore, that the staff learn to be tolerant of patrons who behave in an unusual manner. Yet, it is equally important not to ignore someone whose behavior endangers the public or drives them out of the building.

The following guidelines are designed both to help the staff decide if a patron is really being a problem, and to provide ways to deal and cope with problem patrons.

The Problem Patron Committee wishes to thank the Eugene (Oregon) Public Library, the Saint Paul (Minnesota) Public Library, the Library Administration and Management Association Division of the American Library Association, Mr. Clifford Wood, Director of Security and Safety, Union College, Margery Beeler, Lois Hodges and Peggy Stringer of the library staff, whose help and materials were used in compiling this manual.

Problem Patron Committee:
Marion Brown, Wonja Brucker,
Timothy McGowan, Malinda Meyers

December 1981

II. USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

POLICE

Schenectady	374-7744
Rotterdam	355-7331
Scotia	374-3119
Duanesburg	895-2325

FIRE

Schenectady	374-3111
Scotia	346-0729
Rotterdam	355-7331
Duanesburg	375-6474

AMBULANCE/PARAMEDICS — CALL POLICE

DRUG INFORMATION CENTER — 382-3380

Schenectady County Drug Abuse Prevention Council
4th Floor, County Office Building, 620 State Street
Mon. - Fri. 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

ALCOHOLISM DAY TREATMENT PROGRAM — 382-4179

Ellis Hospital, Mon. - Fri. 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

ALCOHOLISM COUNCIL AND CLINIC OF SCHENECTADY COUNTY — 382-3387

277 State Street
Mon.- Fri. 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Tues. & Thur. 4:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

ELLIS HOSPITAL MENTAL HEALTH CENTER — 382-4161

Out-patient clinic, Mon.-Fri. 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
In-patient clinic and emergency care - 24 hours

SHARED SERVICES PROGRAM OF THE CAPITAL DISTRICT PSYCHIATRIC CENTER AND ELLIS HOSPITAL DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY

FRANKLIN STREET MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC — 370-7387
426 Franklin Street
Mon.-Fri. 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

CARVER MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC — 382-4175
700 Craig Street
Mon.-Fri. 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

DIVISION FOR YOUTH, NEW YORK STATE, YOUTH SERVICE, TEAM B — 346-2377

530 Franklin Street
Mon.-Fri. 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Provides counseling for youth

INFOLINE OF SCHENECTADY — 374-2244

Information and referral service
Mon.-Fri. 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
24 hour recorded phone service

CITY MISSION OF SCHENECTADY 377-5591

425 Hamilton Street
Daily 4:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m.
Available 24 hours for referrals on homeless and transient men.

YOUTH DIVISION, SCHENECTADY POLICE 382-5256

Concerned with juvenile problems

TRAVELER'S AID SOCIETY, INC. 463-2124
CAPITAL DISTRICT

Schenectady Travel Center
22 State Street
24 hours
Aids transient or stranded individuals

BRIDGE CENTER (DRUG REHABILTATION PROGRAM) 346-1277

70 Union Street

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION 374-2542

1248 Wendell Avenue
Mon., Wed., Fri. 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
Information and referral on mental health services

For additional information see the Community Services Directory (R361.8 CF33a2) at the Reference Desk.

III. DEFINITIONS OF PERSON-IN-CHARGE

Department Person-In-Charge

Is usually a staff member with a number of years seniority and can be identified by checking:

In Reference Department - The staff member's name underlined in red on the Reference work schedule posted on the bulletin board opposite the Switchboard.

In Children's Room - The staff member's name underlined in red on the Children's Room work schedule posted on the bulletin board opposite the Switchboard.

In Circulation Department - The staff member's name underlined in red on the Circulation work schedule posted on the bulletin board at the entrance of the Circulation Workroom (main floor)

Librarian-In-Charge

Is the Department Person-In-Charge for the Reference Department and is officially in charge of building operations from 5:30-9:00 p.m. each evening and all day Saturday.

Department Head

Reference Department-Margaret Leonhardt

Circulation Department-Jean Rettie

Children's Room-Lois Hodges

Technical Services- James Foley

Coordinator of Branches-Phyllis Bornt

Assistant Director

Is officially in charge of building operations 9:00 a.m. - 5 p.m. If unavailable during those hours, any problem should be referred to the Director.

IV. ACCIDENTS AND GENERAL COMPLAINTS

Specific Enforcement Procedures

Problem	Response
Questions about library selection policy	A. If an individual questions the selection of library materials, point out the appropriate section in Materials Selection Policy of the Schenectady County Public Library (R+025.2 S32, circ. also) B. If necessary, the patron can fill out a "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials" form (#124) available at the Reference Desk. C. The completed form should be given to the Department Head who will refer it to the ordering librarian whose subject field the problem involves. This staff member will prepare a complete re-evaluation of the material in question. The patron should be notified promptly with copies of the written response forwarded to the Department Head and the Director.

Problem	Response
Questions or complaints about library policies	A. All library users have a right to question general library procedures and policy. When such situations arise staff members should: 1. Remain calm and be receptive and nonjudgmental. 2. Listen carefully to the patron's question or complaint. 3. Pause and think before responding. 4. Clearly explain the library's policy and show a written copy of it to the patron if necessary. 5. Repeat and rephrase what has been said. 6. Follow through with action. 7. Try to find alternatives, if possible. 8. If necessary, refer to another coworker or the Department Person-In-Charge. 9. If the patron is still not satisfied, refer to the Department Head, Assistant Director, or Director. For additional guidelines see ANGRY OR IRATE PATRONS.

Problem	Response
Sudden illness or injury of patron	A. If a patron is injured or becomes ill and requires medical attention, the Department Person-In-Charge should call the police who will request an ambulance or paramedic team be sent to the library immediately. The library should never call the ambulance directly or offer to drive the ill or injured patron anywhere for medical assistance. B. In all injuries of a serious nature, such as falls, broken limbs, shock, unconsciousness, epileptic attacks, the injured should <u>not</u> be moved. Wait for the paramedic team. Meanwhile, make the injured patron as comfortable as possible, using a pillow and blanket from the staff lounge if necessary. C. Inform the patron that help is coming and notify other public departments where the emergency is located. D. The Department Person-In-Charge or other staff members should clear the area of bystanders. Remove any obstacles, i.e., small furniture, book trucks or anything that may be in the path of the emergency assistance crew.

Problem	Response
Sudden illness or injury of patron	E. Obtain the name of the injured party and a witness, in case there is legal action taken against the library. F. The Department Person-In-Charge should complete an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report."

V. PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

Definition

Problem behavior is any behavior which either consciously or unconsciously violates or restricts the rights of others to use the library.

Handling Problem Patrons

Staff members should deal with problem patrons in the same manner that you would like to be approached: with courtesy, tact, calmness and most of all common sense. But it is important to understand that there is no simple "recipe" for solutions. Some problem patrons simply sit and cry; others are hostile, abusive or even violent. Still others may be hallucinating, or they may suffer from delusions. In short, problem behavior can range from the pitiful to the eccentric to the dangerous. The way in which the staff approaches the situation should depend to a large extent on which type of behavior the problem patron is exhibiting.

Because of the uniqueness of each situation, common sense should play a large part in any encounter with a problem patron. Most workers' instincts will tell them when to be sympathetic or when to back off if a patron is potentially violent. But whatever the case, handling problem patrons should be a team procedure by calling on other staff members as necessary.

The team approach to problem behavior provides the staff with security and self-confidence, both of which are necessary to deal effectively with problem patrons. However, in order for the team approach to work, all members of the staff must know what their responsibilities are when a problem situation arises. The following guidelines will help the staff to know what is expected of them.

General Enforcement Procedures

A. A staff member who observes someone causing a disturbance should take the the following action:

   1. Approach the individual in question and explain the appropriate regulation of the library which is being violated.
   2. If necessary, hand out the flyer with the library's regulations printed on it.

B. If a staff member judges a disturbance too serious to handle alone, call for back-up from co-workers and report to the Department Person-In-Charge nearest to where the incident is occurring.

C. If an individual does not stop the improper behavior, or does not leave the building when instructed, the Department Person-In-Charge should call the police immediately:

   1. Tell the police you are calling from the library.
   2. Give the police your name and department/branch.
   3. Briefly describe the incident and emphasize that help is needed.
   4. Get the police officer's name and record the time of the telephone call.

D. When the Department Person-In-Charge calls the police, that person, or a designated staff member, should notify other public departments as to the location of the incident and inform them that the police are coming.

E. When the police arrive, the staff member who called the police and those who witnessed the incident should answer any questions for the police.

F. For a serious or dangerous confrontation, do not hesitate to follow through. Any person who witnesses the offense can act as complainant for the library in a criminal prosecution. An investigator is always assigned to accompany the witness through the criminal proceedings. Once the library builds a reputation for being thorough with offenders, they will stay away.

G. As soon as the incident is over, the Department Person-In-Charge should complete the "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report" form (#108) located in each library department or branch and file it with the Department Head. The Department Head should file the report with the Director's Office within one working day.

Exceptions to the Above Procedures

A. In most cases, the Department Person-In-Charge or the Librarian-In-Charge should telephone the police. However, in an emergency situation any staff member should call the police from the nearest telephone.

B. Branch Librarians should file the "Accident, Disturbance Report" with the Branch Coordinator.

Specific Enforcement Procedures

Problem	Response
Angry or irate patrons	A. Having to deal with an angry patron often brings to the fore feelings of fear, lack of self-confidence, and sometimes anger and frustration. The following techniques can help you when facing an angry patron: 1. Remain calm. Do not give the appearance of being combative but do not appear fearful either. 2. Listen attentively and elicit all information about the complaint. 3. Be aware of how you are speaking. Speak slowly and clearly and if you are using a loud tone, lower your voice. 4. Empathize with the patron and try to understand exactly how he feels. If a patron is assured you understand his feelings of anger, then there is no need to to express that anger at a higher level. 5. Feedback the patron's own words by repeating what he has said (paraphrase). 6. Once you have paraphrased the patron's previous statement, secure his confirmation that your paraphrase was an accurate restatement of what was said. 7. If the patron says your paraphrase was not accurate, try again until you get

agreement or ask the patron to restate the point. Paraphrase again until you have done so to the patron's satisfaction.

8. Make your contribution only when your paraphrasing has been accepted by the patron.

9. When the patron wants to speak he must accurately paraphrase <u>you</u> and receive <u>your</u> agreement before speaking.

10. Paraphrasing is especially useful during arguments of highly emotional issues when one side tends to prepare a rebuttal while the other side is still speaking. This method insures that both sides really listen because each side must be able to restate the other's position. The resulting communication is usually clearer and the relationships between participants is frequently enhanced.

11. The following dialogue between a staff member and a patron is an example using the above technique:

<u>Patron</u> (handing a staff member a slip with a book title on it): "I reserved

Problem	Response
Angry or irate patrons	this book two months ago and I still haven't heard anything!" Staff member: "I can see you're angry about not receiving the book you wanted. If books are not returned to us on time it can often cause delays in filling reserves. Let me check our records and see where the problem is."

B. When you understand what the problem is, take some immediate action:

1. If the patron's complaint is legitimate, do something immediately to insure the situation is alleviated. For example, if a patron is complaining about a long, unfilled reserve, check to see if a branch owns it, or request the book on Interlibrary Loan while the patron is standing there.
2. If the patron's complaint is not legitimate and he wants you to alter established policy, you need to be firm. Explain the library's policy and show the patron a written copy of it if necessary.
3. Instead of arguing with the person, simply restate the library's policy

Problem	Response
Angry or irate patrons	over and over. 4. While remaining firm, try to find alternatives that will alleviate the situation without violating policy. Perhaps you can even ask the patron to help you think of acceptable alternatives. C. After completing the above guidelines and the patron persists, ask for help from co-workers. D. If this does not defuse the situation, then the Department Person-In-Charge should be called. Often angry people will respond more positively to people who are "in charge". E. If the patron is still not satisfied, the Department Head should be called. F. If the Department Head is needed but unavailable, the Department Person-In-Charge should take the patron's name and telephone number, and tell the patron you will refer the problem to the Department Head as soon as possible. G. If necessary, the patron can be referred to the Assistant Director or Director.

Problem	Response
Angry or irate patrons	H. However, in most cases, by maintaining a calm, firm attitude and by finding suitable alternatives for the patron, you will be able to cool down an angry situation and come to a satisfactory conclusion for both the library and the patron.

Problem	Response
Assault, or physically threatening patrons	A. The key to control in situations where a patron is being physically threatening, or someone is in imminent danger of assault, is TEAMWORK. B. Act as calmly as possible and do not argue. C. Try to leave the scene, if possible, and alert other staff members and patrons to move away. D. A staff member who is physically unable to break away should yell for help from nearby co-workers or patrons while another staff member should call the police. E. While it may be physically impossible for an individual staff member to break up an assault, there is always safety in numbers. Staff members and patrons should attempt any techiques of self-defense that will break up or distract the attacker until the police arrive. A person is always legally entitled to use self-defense, or to go to the defense of another person who is being attacked, and is entitled to use the same amount of violence as is used by the attacker: SEE APPENDIX FOR SELF-DEFENSE TECHNIQUES.

Problem	Response
Chatty patrons who distract staff members	A. Chatty patrons are sometimes lonely people, and the staff should be tolerant of their behavior. B. Be polite but discourage long, irrelevant conversations with patrons. C. If a patron continues a lengthy conversation the staff member should politely explain that it is necessary to return to work or help another patron. D. Other staff members should be aware of situations like this and intervene, if necessary, to break up the conversation.

Problem	Response
Children who become disruptive	A. Groups of children who become loud or noisy should be told in a firm, but nice way, that this behavior is inappropriate in a library and is disturbing to others.
	B. If the noise continues, the staff member should remind the group in a stricter tone of voice.
	C. If the problem persists, the Children's Librarian should be consulted to decide whether the children must leave the library.
	D. Programs for children (story hours, puppet shows, etc.) may present a problem. If patrons complain about the noise level, explain the circumstances.
	E. Children running and playing throughout the library are hazardous to themselves and others and should be stopped at once.
	F. Children should not be allowed to play with or misuse the microfilm reader/printers, typewriter, photocopy machines, visualtek, or any other AV equipment in the Adult

Problem	Response
Children who become disruptive	Department. Refer them to the AV staff on duty. If the AV staff is unavailable, contact the Children's Librarian.
	G. If parents have accompanied children who become disruptive but fail to correct their behavior, the staff member should first speak to the children.
	H. If the behavior continues, the staff member should inform the parents that their children are disturbing others.
	I. The use of the library as a temporary baby sitting service by parents should be discouraged. Librarians should tell parents that the library does not provide such a service and cannot be responsible for their children.

Problem	Response
Children, preschool-being left unattended or lost	A. Children separated from or left unattended by their parents are frightened and often crying and should be comforted by the staff. B. If it is determined that a child is lost or left unattended, the staff member should bring the child to the Children's Librarian. C. The Children's Librarian should try to identify or locate the parents or responsible adults, and when located, explain firmly the library's policy on unattended children. D. If the library is closing and the parents or responsible adults have not returned for their child, or cannot be contacted, the Children's Librarian should call the police. E. The Children's Librarian should remain with the child until appropriate arrangements have been made. F. Under no circumstances should a staff member drive the child home.

Problem	Response
Consuming food or beverages in the library.	If the library user is consuming food or beverages in the library, (except in the McChesney Room when eating is allowed) a staff member should approach the individual and explain the library's policy. A patron who does not stop should be asked to leave.

Problem

Disruptive Behavior

Response

A. Disruptive behavior by a patron is a problem which is usually not of a threatening nature but nonetheless is disturbing. It is a problem which can occur either inside or outside the library. Examples of disruptive behavior include: a man cursing at the top of his lungs, an adult singing loudly along with the phonograph player, or children pounding on the windows from outside the building.

B. Other patrons are not always quick to report a disruptive patron to the staff. The staff should be alert to signs that a patron with a behavioral problem is present. These signs include:

   1. Patrons moving away from another patron.
   2. Patrons staring at another patron.
   3. Patrons looking at staff members as a form of complaint.

C. If an individual purposefully or unintentionally disrupts staff members or library users the staff member who witnesses the incident should approach the individual and explain that the behavior is inappropriate in the library and to stop at once.

Problem	Response
Disruptive Behavior	D. If the behavior continues, the staff member should notify the Department Person-In-Charge.
	E. The Department Person-In-Charge should tell the individual to stop the behavior or leave the library.
	F. If the patron still continues to act disruptively and refuses to leave, the Department Person-In-Charge should call the police.
	G. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report" if the police are called.

Problem	Response
Drugs or chemically dependent patrons	A. It is not always obvious whether a person who is acting strangely is under the influence of drugs or suffering from a more permanent psychological problem. Whatever the case, the staff member should not make the patron feel threatened, as this will only make the situation worse.
	B. A staff member in need of help in dealing with the individual should consult with the Department Person-In-Charge.
	C. The Department Person-In-Charge or the Librarian-In-Charge should decide either to refer the patron to the Drug Information Center (SEE USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS) or call the police.
	D. A staff member or a patron who witnesses the use or sale of illegal drugs should notify the Department Person-In-Charge. However, only the person who actually witnessed the incident can legally press charges.
	E. File an "Accident, Disturbance Vandalism Report" if the police are called.

Problem	Response
Drunks	A. Anyone openly carrying a bottle of beer, wine or liquor in the library (including the restrooms) and drinking from it should be considered a problem patron. B. Judgment needs to be exercised in the case of people who smell of alcohol. If the patron's behavior is not otherwise offensive, then there is no problem. If, on the other hand, the patron is noticeably intoxicated, loud, obnoxious or if other patrons are complaining, the staff member needs to take action. C. Drunks are potentially very dangerous and should be approached with caution. Although they may appear calm, any words or actions from a staff member could turn them violent in a second. D. Staff members should get back-up help from co-workers and ask the individual to leave the building because "Drinking is inappropriate in a public library." E. If the individual refuses to leave, the staff member should contact the Department Person-In-Charge who should warn the individual that the police will be called.

Problem	Response
Drunks	F. If the problem persists and the individual will not leave, or is incapable of leaving, the Department Person-In-Charge should contact the police. Staff members should not jeopardize themselves by physically touching or assisting the drunk. Wait for the police.
	G. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report" if the police are called.

Problem	Response
Emotionally/mentally disturbed patrons.	A. Dealing with patrons who act or talk irrationally can be difficult but if the behavior is not disturbing to others, it should be ignored. If, on the other hand, the unusual behavior is disruptive, then the staff member should take action. B. Take a firm, consistent stand and speak in a commanding voice, explaining the library's regulations and that "Your behavior is disturbing to others and inappropriate in the public library". C. However, do not corner or touch the individual. Allow space so that the person can leave the building easily in case he feels threatened. D. Do not argue the patron out of hallucinations or delusions. Simply restate your message about the library's policy over and over. Sometimes a firm stand forces an emotionally disturbed person to face the reality of the situation. E. A staff member having difficulty dealing with the individual should call for help from co-workers and let the Department Person-In-Charge know that you are having trouble.

Problem	Response
Emotionally/mentally disturbed patrons	F. If the disturbance continues and the individual will not respond or is physically threatening to himself, other patrons or staff, the Department Person-In-Charge should call the police immediately. G. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report" if the police are called.

Problem	Response
Feet	Patrons with bare feet are not permitted in the building. Placing of feet on tables and chairs is also prohibited. If these incidents occur, a staff member should remind the patron of the regulations. If he will not comply, he should be asked to leave.

Problem	Response
Loiterers	A. Loitering is not permitted on the library premises. B. If someone appears to be loitering, the staff member should attempt to move the person by asking if assistance is needed, or by communicating that the library staff would prefer the library be used for the purposes for which it was intended. C. If the individual is loitering regularly, the staff member should explain the library's regulation against loitering. D. If the person continues loitering, the Department-Person-In-Charge should call the police. E. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report" if the police are called.

Problem	Response
Panhandlers or soliciters on the library premises.	A. Panhandling or soliciting are strictly prohibited on the library premises. B. A staff member who witnesses a violation of the above regulation should explain the library's policy. C. If the problem persists, the staff member should notify the Department Person-In-Charge who should tell the individual to stop. If the individual continues, the Department Person-In-Charge should call the police. D. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report" if the police are called.

Problem	Response
Pets	Patrons are not allowed to bring pets of any kind or size into the building. Legally, Seeing Eye Dogs are exempt from this regulation.

Problem	Response
Purse snatchers	A. If a library user reports a handbag or purse missing or stolen: 1. Ask the person if the bag could have been misplaced somewhere else or left in the car. If not, the person's steps should be retraced while in the building. 2. If the purse is not found, a search should be made of the building, including the restrooms and especially the wastepaper containers. Also check outside the building among the shrubbery, etc. in case it was tossed there. 3. Urge the person to notify the police if the bag is not located. 4. The staff member should take the name and telephone number of the patron and give it to Switchboard and the Circulation Department in case the bag or purse is eventually located. B. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report".

Problem	Response
Sexual deviants: girl/boy watchers, flashers etc.	A. Girl/boy watchers 1. If someone is suspiciously watching or following a staff member or a patron, try to get a general description. Note height, coloring, age, general build and what the person is wearing. 2. Although the offender may be gone by the time you report it, it is a good practice to tell fellow staff members what the offender looks like so they can be on the watch. 3. If necessary, the Department Person-In-Charge should warn the individual, if located, that the behavior is offensive, against the law and the police will be called. 4. If the problem persists, the Department Person-In-Charge should call the police. 5. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report" if the police are called. B. Flashers 1. If this happens to a staff member:

Problem	Response
Sexual deviants: boy/girl watchers, flashers etc.	a) Remain calm and do not show shock or alarm at the action as this behavior thrives on it. b) Try to remember as much of a description of the person as possible. c) Immediately alert fellow staff members and the Department Person-In-Charge. d) The Department Person-In-Charge should call the police and give a description and location of the incident. e) If the deviant is still around, the staff member who witnessed the incident should identify the person to the police and be encouraged to have him arrested. f) File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report".

Problem	Response
Sexual deviants: girl/boy watchers, flashers etc.	2. If this happens to a patron: a) Help the patron calm down and explain the situation. b) Obtain a general description and the location of the incident. c) The Department Person-In-Charge should call the police with this information. d) If the offender is still around, the patron should be encouraged to have him arrested but the decision should not be forced. e) Offer the patron whatever additional help may be necessary. f) Make sure that the patron has regained self-possession before leaving. In the case of children, offer to call their parents etc. g) File an "Accident, Disturbance Vandalism Report".

Problem	Response
Sleepers	A. Sleeping is not allowed in the building. Library users who simply doze off for a short period may be left alone. The library's regulation pertains to habitual sleepers or those who are noisy, sprawled out on the furniture, or generally disturbing to other patrons. Discretion should be used in approaching sleeping patrons. Do not physically shake or touch them since they may possibly swing out at you as you awaken them.
	B. Sleeping patrons should be told to remain awake.
	C. The staff member should check back after approximately ten minutes, and if they are still sleeping, they should be asked to leave the building.

Problem	Response
Smelly patrons	If a person's odor is so strong that it is offensive to staff and other patrons, the staff member should report to the Department Person-In-Charge who should quietly ask the individual to leave the library and not return until the person cleans himself.

Problem	Response
Smokers	According to section 1399-o of the New York State Public Health Code, it is unlawful for any person to smoke tobacco in any form in any indoor facility which is open to the public such as the library. A staff member who observes an individual smoking, should ask the offender to stop at once or leave the library. The only exceptions would be at meetings when ashtrays are provided and in the foyer.

Problem	Response
Suspicious behavior	Some library users act strangely and may or may not be disturbing to other library users. For example, a man who is nervously pacing back and forth in front of the Reference Desk. If there is any question about whether an individual is behaving in a suspicious manner, alert other staff. Staff members should consult with the Department Person-In-Charge to determine what action, if any, needs to be taken.

Problem	Response
Teen-age gangs, rowdy behavior	A. The staff member should approach the members of the group and ask them calmly but firmly, to stop the disruptive behavior. Do not show fear or be sidetracked or intimidated. Never physically touch them. B. If the group continues to be rowdy, the staff member should give a second warning. Call for reinforcements from coworkers in issuing the warning, if necessary. C. If the group ignores the previous warnings, the staff member or the Department Person-In-Charge should tell the group to leave immediately, and, if they refuse, the police should be called. D. Chronic teen-age offenders should be reported to the police immediately and barred from entering. E. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report".

Problem	Response
Theft of library materials or property	A. Unauthorized removal, or attempted re-removal, of library materials is, in legal terms, larceny. To establish that a larceny has been committed, the library must prove beyond any reasonable doubt that two elements were present at the time of apprehension: 1. The taking away and current possession of property of value by the subject. 2. The intent to steal. When these two elements are clearly present, apprehension, detention and arrest are appropriate. B. Even if a library patron is attempting to leave the library with materials which have not been properly checked out, it must <u>not</u> be assumed that theft was the intent - absent mindedness, misunderstanding of procedures, etc. - are all possible causes. In such instances, the patron should be approached pleasantly and the problem should be corrected. C. The most common way of proving intent to steal is by showing that the suspect concealed the item. However, simply because

Problem	Response
Theft of library materials or property	an item is not visible to the eye does not legally mean that it has been concealed. To prove intent to steal by concealment, the item must be carried in a place or manner in which it would not ordinarily be carried. A patron attempting to exit the library with a briefcase containing materials which have not been checked out, has not legally concealed the materials since that is where books might normally be carried. The patron could claim that they were inadvertently scooped up with other materials.
	D. On the other hand, if a patron is attempting to exit the library with materials under his clothing or covertly wrapped in something, concealment can be used to prove intent to steal since library materials are not usually carried in this manner.
	E. If it is determined that a patron has willfully tried to violate the law and both "possession" and "intent to steal" seem clearly evident or proveable, the

Problem	Response
Theft of library materials or property	staff member should tell the suspect that unless he surrenders the concealed library property, the police will be called.
	F. If the material is not handed over, have a co-worker or the Department Person-In-Charge call the police while you remain with the person.
	G. If the suspect tries to leave, the staff member should be careful not to risk personal injury by attempting to physically detain the individual. Many times, however, an authoritarian tone of voice and manner may convince a patron to remain or hand over the library materials.
	H. If the patron leaves before the police arrive, give them his name (if known) or a general description. They will usually apprehend the individual.
	I. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report".

Problem

Theft of library materials at the book detection system of the central library.

Response

A. If the alarm of the book detection system is triggered by a patron leaving the library, the Circulation staff legally has "reasonable" cause to detain and should follow the procedures listed below:

1. Ask the patron to step back in order to check any library materials that might not have been charged out. If the person already has charged out materials, they should be desensitized again and then passed around the Circulation Desk avoiding the detection machine.
2. Request the patron to go through the gate again. If the alarm continues to go off, the patron should be asked to step back once more. Inquire whether the person has any metal objects or other library materials that were not charged out.
3. Ask the patron to proceed through the gate. If the alarm still rings, the patron must step back. At this point, the staff member should

Problem	Response
Theft of library materials at the book detection system of the central library.	request to see the inside of the the patron's briefcase, coat, jacket or pocketbook. The staff member should never physically frisk the individual. If the patron is upset or angry, you should explain the library's policy and, if necessary, ask for help from co-workers, or the Department Person-In-Charge. 4. The staff member should try to locate the concealed materials or the object that is triggering the machine. Follow the procedures for THEFT OF LIBRARY MATERIALS OR PROPERTY. 5. If you find a patron is trying to remove Reference materials, explain that these never leave the library but suggest that the Reference Desk staff could see if there are any circulating copies. Remind the individual that there are two photocopy machines available to reproduce information needed from these sources.

Problem	Response
Theft of library materials at the book detection system of the central library.	6. If the patron is trying to remove Circulating materials that have not been charged out, tell the individual that a record must be kept of all Circulating materials that leave the library. Explain that a library card is required to charge out library materials. If the patron produces a valid library card then the materials can be charged out. 7. If the patron does not have a library card, the stipulations for getting a card should be explained. If the person qualifies and is willing to fill out the application to obtain a card, then the patron should be allowed to charge out materials. B. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report" if the police are called.

Problem	Response
Vandals and destructive patrons	A. The library staff has a right and duty to protect public property. According to New York State Education Law section #264, "Whoever intentionally injures, defaces, or destroys property belonging to an incorporated library, shall be punished by imprisonment, or a fine of not more than $500.00, or both a fine and imprisonment." Examples of destructive behavior by patrons are: 1. Destroying or defacing of library materials including the slicing of pages from books, periodicals and newspapers. 2. Vandalism of library property including defacing of walls and furniture, damaging facilities (such as restrooms), breaking windows. B. Destructive patrons can be careless or thoughtless; others can be dangerous. The staff member must size up the situation and decide the best method of handling it. C. If a staff member observes or receives a report that someone is defacing or destroying library property, and the patron seems harmless the staff member should let the

Problem	Response
Vandals and destructive patrons	individual know that the actions in question are against the law and must stop at once. D. If it is determined that the patron has vandalized library property, the incident should be reported to the Department Person-In-Charge who should discuss with the patron means of restitution. E. If a staff member observes or receives a report that a patron is maliciously destroying library property, and is obviously not approachable, the staff member should call the police immediately. The library will prosecute anyone who maliciously destroys library property but arrest power can only be exercised when the vandalism has been observed and is committed in the presence of the person signing the citation or making the arrest. F. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report."

Problem	Response
Verbal abuse of staff	A. If a library user speaks to a staff member in an abusive or obscene manner, try to remain calm and remember that it is not directed at you personally. B. You do not have to listen to obscene language. Tell the patron: "Your language and behavior are not appropriate in a public library and are causing a disturbance. You must either stop, or come back when you have calmed yourself". C. Other fellow staff members should come to the support of the staff member being abused. The Department-Person-In-Charge should intervene to try and defuse the situation. D. If the patron continues to be abusive, do not argue. Say, "You will have to leave the library or I will call the police". E. If the patron refuses to leave, the police should be called by the Department-Person-In-Charge. F. File an "Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report" if the police are called. SEE ALSO ANGRY OR IRATE PATRONS.

VI. APPENDIX

Legal Responses to Problem Behavior

In response to a need on the part of all staff members to recognize problem behavior which necessitates immediate police action, the following examples, taken from the New York State Penal Code, will act as a guide. Obviously, we cannot set forth a blueprint to cover all situations.

OFFENSE	INTENT OR RESULTS
Assault (Sec. 120.00)	Intentionally or by reckless conduct causes injury to another person.
Criminal Mischief (Sec. 145.12)	Intentionally damages the property of another.
Disorderly Conduct (Sec. 240.20)	Causes public inconvenience by : fighting, unreasonable noises, abusive or obscene language/gesture, threatening behavior, hazardous or physically offensive condition.
Harassment (Sec. 240.25)	Threatens or annoys another person by physical contact or abusive or obscene language, or follows a person in or about a public place.
Jostling (Sec. 165.25)	Places a hand in the proximity of a person's pocket or handbag.
Larceny (Sec. 155.05)	Wrongfully takes, obtains, or withholds the property of another.
Loitering (Sec. 240.35)	Loiters, remains, or wanders in a public place without an apparent legitimate reason.
Menacing (Sec. 120.15)	Intentionally places another in fear of imminent physical injury.
Public Lewdness (Sec. 240.00)	Intentionally exposes the private or intimate parts of the body in a lewd manner in a public place.
Trespass* (Sec. 140.05)	Knowingly enters or remains unlawfully in or upon a premises.
*Unlawfully remains	A person who, regardless of his intent, enters or remains in or upon a premises which are at the time open to the public does so with license and privilege, UNLESS HE DEFIES A LAWFUL ORDER NOT TO ENTER OR REMAIN, PERSONALLY COMMUNICATED TO HIM BY THE OWNER OF SUCH PREMISES OR OTHER AUTHORIZED PERSON.

Helpful Hints On How To Deal With Problem Behavior

Incidents which involve problem patrons are among the most difficult situations library staff members face. Problem patrons are often skillful manipulators who know how to use a staff members feelings of doubt, guilt, pity, embarrassment and fear to their best advantage. Lacking experience and self-confidence, some staff members ignore problem situations; others may become overly moralistic and aggressive. When the staff is prepared to meet these situations, such inappropriate responses can be avoided.

The following general suggestions will be helpful to the staff in dealing with problem situations:

1. Listen carefully and assess the situation:

   Problem patrons will generally provide a number of clues about their motivation and likely course of behavior. Take the time to evaluate the situation before reacting.

2. Maintain a calm, nonjudgmental attitude:

   Staying calm will often help to defuse an unpleasant situation and will enable you to exercise better judgment.

3. Avoid a loud tone of voice or use of phrases that might be considered moralizing or condescending.

4. When you understand what the problem is take immediate action.

5. Explain your position in firm, unambiguous language:

   It is important to convince problem causers that you are in charge. Don't become involved in bargaining or argument - this may escalate a confrontation.

6. Do not allow yourself to be sidetracked. Simply repeat your position firmly, as often as necessary.

7. Present suitable alternatives to the behavior which is causing the problem.

8. Discuss sanctions:

   Let the problem patron know what will happen if behavior doesn't stop. (e.g. "You will have to leave the library," "I will call the police.")

9. Use teamwork. Call on other staff members as necessary.

   Often, two staff members will be enough to convince a problem causer to change his behavior. Support is especially important if you have any suspicion that the person may become violent.

10. Call outside help, if necessary:

    Be aware of which agencies should be called upon for particular problems. SEE USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS.

In all dealings with patrons who are causing trouble, it is important to assess the seriousness of the situation as early in the confrontation as possible. The course the staff members should pursue will be dependent upon the accuracy of their assessment and also, to some extent, on the staff members' ingenuity and quick-wittedness.

Self-Defense Techniques

The primary purpose of self-defense if you are being assaulted is quite simple:

You should create pain in the person who has attacked.

Successful self-defense is basically common sense, combined with a little knowledge about how to kick and hit, and what the body's most vulnerable targets are.

Self-defense is made up of the following basic components.

1. Make an absolutely committed response to the attacker.

   Once you have made the choice to defend yourself, whatever the technique that you use, you must do it with complete commitment. You must hurt the assailant badly enough to stop the encounter not hurt him just enough to make him more angry. Use all your speed, all your power and all your anger.

2. Use a firm voice, straight back, strong stance and level gaze.

   Whenever you are in a life threatening situation immediately:

   a) Keep level and direct eye contact with the attacker.

   b) Take a stance where your feet are approximately shoulder width apart, and one foot is slightly ahead of the other.

   c) Use a firm voice. You can often stop an attack just by yelling - not a shriek but a lion's roar "raaarh"

3. Use a combination of effective target and technique. Do not try to match your strength against the attackers:

   a) Hit those parts of the body that cannot be strengthened enough to be attack proof. Go for: eyes, nose, throat, groin, testicles etc.

   b) Strike, kick, stomp, jab or poke these vulnerable parts as fast and as hard as you can. If your target is the nose, do not just hit the nose, aim through the nose to the back of the head.

4. Use your body as a weapon.

   Much of the body can be used as a weapon, singly or in combination. Hands, legs, elbows, feet, teeth and fingers can effectively injure an attacker. For instance, fingers can be used to gouge the eyes or a fist to smash the person in the nose.

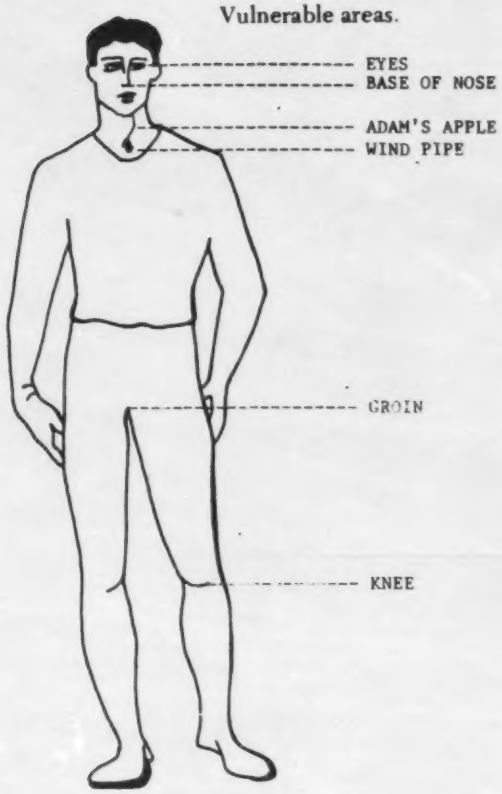
5. Any weapon is better than none at all.

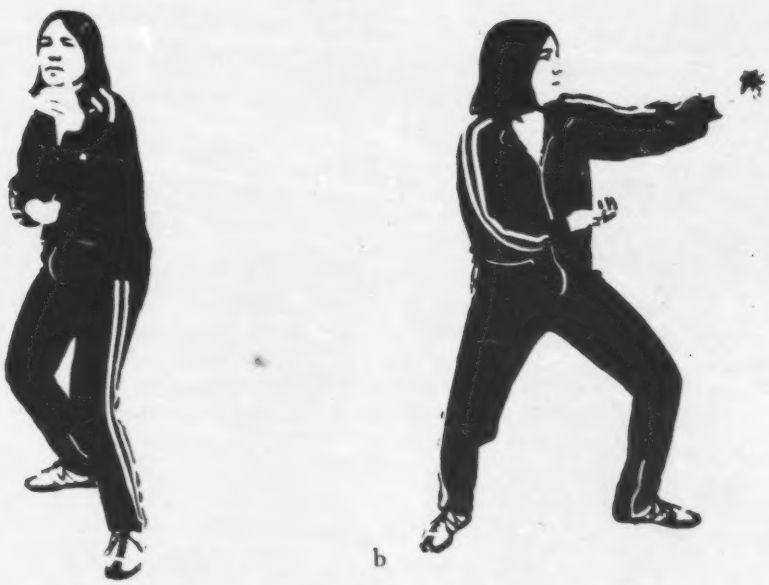
   There is no limit to the things a person customarily carries that can be used as hostile weapons. A pencil or pen, a fingernail file, a comb, a burning cigarette, can readily injure an assailant by clawing or poking at the vulnerable body parts.

Remember that these techniques are ingredients, not recipes. Every situation is unique. These moves are possibilities that can be adopted to whatever the immediate needs are. The key is to be totally committed and use an effective technique directed to a vulnerable target.

Self-Defense: Illustrations

Vulnerable areas.





a b

The basic fighting stance, front view and side view.

ACCIDENT, DISTURBANCE, VANDALISM REPORT

Please fill out full information as it applies to the particular incident:

DEPARTMENT or BRANCH:

DATE:

TIME:

STAFF PRESENT:

NAME OF PATRON (if known):

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PATRON:

NATURE OF ACCIDENT/DISTURBANCE:

PEOPLE INVOLVED/WITNESSES:

ACTION TAKEN:

POLICE CALLED: YES____NO____TIME_____

TIME POLICE ARRIVED:

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

FILE WITH:
1. Department Head
2. Director's Office

_____
Signature of staff member handling incident

Form No. 108

SCHENECTADY COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

The following rules are posted for the comfort and protection of all who use the facilities of this library.

NO

.....SMOKING

.....EATING OR DRINKING IN THE PUBLIC READING AREAS OR STACKS

.....SLEEPING

.....LOITERING OR SOLICITING

.....DRUNK OR DISORDERLY CONDUCT

.....HARASSING OF PATRONS OR LIBRARY PERSONNEL

.....BRINGING PETS INTO THE BUILDING

.....LEAVING PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN UNATTENDED

.....BARE FEET

.....PLACING FEET ON CHAIRS OR TABLES

The violation of any one of these rules may subject the individual(s) involved to exclusion from the library premises.

SAMPLE FLYER
RULES OF THE SCHENECTADY COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Schenectady County Public Library

RULES

governing the use of the library

WHILE IN THE BUILDING, PLEASE DO NOT

- SMOKE
- CONSUME FOOD OR BEVERAGES
- LOITER OR SOLICIT
- SLEEP
- BRING PETS INTO THE BUILDING
- HARASS PATRONS OR LIBRARY PERSONNEL
- BE DRUNK OR DISORDERLY
- LEAVE PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN UNATTENDED
- ENTER WITH BARE FEET
- PLACE FEET ON TABLES OR CHAIRS

THE VIOLATION OF ANY ONE OF THESE RULES MAY SUBJECT THE INDIVIDUAL(S) INVOLVED TO EXCLUSION FROM THE LIBRARY PREMISES.

3/81/TM/3000

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

Library Department: Adult ____ Children's ____

Library Branch _____

Librarian _____ Date _____

Author _____

Title _____

Publisher _____

Date of Publication _____ Hardcover ___ Paperback ___ Other _____

Request by _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ Zip _____

Representing himself _____

Name of organization _____

Other _____

What brought this book to your attention? (reviews, word-of-mouth, etc.)

_____

If reviews, please give name and date of publication, if possible _____

_____

Have you read the entire book? _____ To what in the book (or other medium) do you object? (Please be specific; cite pages) _____

_____

_____

The department head concerned will prepare a complete written re-evaluation of the book (or other material) in the light of the objection raised; and the person making this request will be notified promptly of the department's action and decision.

If the re-evaluation substantiates the original decision to include the title questioned, it will remain in the collection. If the criticism is considered valid, the title will be removed from the collection. The final decision rests with the Director of the library

SCHENECTADY COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
Schenectady, New York

Form No. 124

VII. INDEX

Accident, Disturbance, Vandalism Report, 58

Accidents and general complaints, 5

Angry or irate patrons, 12

Assault or physically threatening patrons, 17

Bare feet, 30

Beverages, 22

Book detection system of the central library, 46

Chatty patrons who distract staff members, 25

Chemically dependent patrons, 25

Children, 19

Children, pre-school being left unattended or lost, 21

Complaints, 6

Consuming food or beverages in the library, 22

Definitions of Person-In-Charge, 4

Department Head, 4

Destructive patrons, 49

Disruptive behavior, 23

Drugs or chemically dependent patrons, 25

Drunks, 26

Eating in the library, 22

Emotionally/mentally disturbed patrons, 28

Feet, 30

Flashers, 35

Food, 22

Girl/boy watchers, 35

Harrassment of staff or patrons, 23

Helpful hints on how to deal with problem behavior, 53

Illness of patrons, 7

Injury of patrons, 7

Irate patrons, 12

Larceny, 34, 43, 46

Legal responses to problem behavior, 52

Librarian-In-Charge, 4

Library policies, 6

Loiterers, 31

Lost children, 21

Materials selection policy, 5

Mentally disturbed patrons, 28

Odor, personal, 39

Panhandlers or soliciters on the library premises, 32

Person-In-Charge, 4

Pets, 33

Physically threatening patrons, 17

Problem behavior,
- Definition, 9
- Handling problem patrons, 9
- General enforcement procedures, 10
- Specific enforcement procedures, 12, 51
- Helpful hints on how to deal with problem behavior, 53

Purse snatchers, 34

Questions about library selection policy, 5

Questions or complaints about library policy, 6

Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials, 5, 61

Rowdy behavior, 42

Rules of the Schenectady County Public Library, 59

Self-defense techniques, 55

Sexual deviants: girl/boy watchers, flashers etc., 35

Sleepers, 38

Smelly patrons, 39

Smokers, 40

Soliciters, 32

Sudden illness or injury of patrons, 7

Suspicious behavior, 41

Teen-age gangs, rowdy behavior, 42

Telephone numbers, 2

Theft of library materials or property, 43

Theft of library materials at the book detection system of the central library, 46

Useful telephone numbers, 2

Vandals and destructive patrons, 49

Verbal abuse, 51

ADDENDUM

Attention New York State Public Libraries

Effective July 27, 1982 public library personnel are no longer held personally liable for detaining a person for a reasonable length of time in order to determine if he or she has attempted to remove unauthorized library material. The following is a reprint of the new law:

INVESTIGATION AS TO POSSESSION OF PUBLIC LIBRARY MATERIALS—DEFENSE OF LAWFUL DETENTION

CHAPTER 784

Approved and effective July 27, 1982

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to the defense of lawful detention

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section two hundred sixty-five-a to read as follows:

§ 265-a. Defense of lawful detention. In any action for false arrest, false imprisonment, unlawful detention, defamation of character, assault, trespass or invasion of civil rights brought by any person by reason of having been detained on or in the immediate vicinity of the premises of a public library for the purpose of investigation or questioning as to the ownership of any materials, it shall be a defense to such action that the person was detained in a reasonable manner and for not more than a reasonable time to permit such investigation or questioning by a peace officer or by the librarian in charge, his or her authorized employee or agent, and that such peace officer, librarian, employee or agent has reasonable grounds to believe that the person so detained was committing or attempting to commit larceny on such premises of such materials. As used in this section, "reasonable grounds" shall include, but not be limited to, knowledge that a person has concealed, unauthorized possession of material owned or belonging to the public library, and a "reasonable time" shall mean the time necessary to permit the person detained to make a statement or to refuse to make a statement, and the time necessary to examine employees and records of the public library relative to the ownership of the materials.

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.